

who invited him into their homes on their televisions every night, including our home in Delaware.

Jim's career was born before he even graduated college. He was attending Columbia University in the late 1960s. Our country was in turmoil over race and the Vietnam war—a war in which I served. His first ever report was on the historic student riots on campus. That gave him his first taste of broadcast journalism.

He went on to report for a radio station—I think it was WINS Radio—and then another station called WFAS and then WKBW-TV in New York City before making his way down south to join us in the Delaware Valley in 1976, when he joined WPVI-TV as a reporter and as anchor for “Action News at Noon.”

Just shy of 1 year later, he became the anchor of the 6 o'clock news and the 11 o'clock broadcast, where he has been every night—every night—since, helping guide viewers through noteworthy events both globally and locally.

Over the years, Jim's assignments included interviews. He has interviewed a lot of Presidents and folks who maybe aspire to be President. I don't. Among those are Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Herbert Walker Bush, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and a scrappy kid from Scranton who ended up as a Senator from Delaware, Joe Biden, who is now our President.

Throughout the years, Jim has interviewed Philadelphia mayors—I can't count all the ones—from Frank Rizzo to Jim Kenney, and he has covered I think 21 political conventions. Think about that—21 political conventions. There is a special place in Heaven for Jim Gardner for doing that, I will tell you.

Locally, Jim was the narrating voice of our 2008 Phillies and 2018 Eagles world championship parades, and those teams were really good this year as well. The Phillies made it all the way to the World Series, and the Eagles are knocking on the door to do something special in the NFL playoffs later this year.

As the “Action News” opening song says “Move closer to your world,” he has also traveled abroad to help us understand some of the biggest stories in history—not just in Delaware, not just in the Delaware Valley, but across the world. He reported from the Vatican to cover the death of, for example, Pope Paul VI. He traveled to Germany to cover the return of American hostages from Iran. He reported from Russia and Lithuania after the fall of the Soviet Union. He covered the Oslo Accords from Israel and from the West Bank. He traveled to Cuba to cover Pope John Paul II and then went to Argentina to report on the life of Pope Francis.

Perhaps what has allowed Jim to hold the trust of his viewers while engaging his audience night after night is that no matter where he has traveled—no matter where he has traveled—he

understands that what matters to his viewers most can be found right in our own backyards, community events, at school board and town council meetings, houses of worship, and by talking to our neighbors.

It is with great pleasure that we rise on behalf of Delaware's congressional delegation to honor the exemplary career of Jim Gardner.

I want to say, Jim, to you and your family, congratulations on a job well done. We want to convey our thanks to your wife Amy—there is a special place in Heaven for her and for our spouses as well—and to your four children for sharing their dad with us and the people of our region of America. Delaware Valley is a better place because of you. God bless. Godspeed.

With that, I am pleased to yield to my wingman from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I join my colleague from our home State of Delaware in ensuring that Jim Gardner's four decades of leadership in our community, in our local news, and in laying down a marker for what it means to be a real journalist, a trusted and loyal and important part of community leadership—that his service will be remembered and recognized in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Jim Gardner, as my colleague laid out in great detail, born and raised in New York City, turned on to journalism as a student at Columbia University by reporting on the historic Columbia riots in 1968 and then began his remarkable run with WPVI-TV Philadelphia on June 1, 1976.

I have had the honor of being in the newsroom and talking with Jim as he has prepared for a broadcast, of getting a sense of just how good and balanced and thoughtful a journalistic leader he is.

For all of us, it is a real loss that, four decades later, Jim has anchored his last regularly scheduled 11 p.m. broadcast. He is still anchoring the 6 p.m. news.

I will tell you, Jim, my wife Annie and I love watching you. You have given us a sense of continuity, of community, and of character in our local news, unmatched in so many other communities around our country. You are a genuine treasure, a jewel of the Delaware Valley, and we will miss you deeply. You have interviewed Popes and Presidents, local elected officials and international leaders. You have contributed to our understanding of our place in the world and brought us closer together.

I just wanted to say to you personally, congratulations on your retirement. I know that you will get to spend more time with Josh, Jenn, Emily, and Jesse, and your grandson Henry.

Thank you to Amy.

As my colleague and friend TOM CARPER said, it is our spouses who often experience the highs and the lows of our public service, and I know your family has supported you through this remarkable work.

It would be impossible to list all the stories that you reported on or contributed to, but know, Jim, that you have left a lasting legacy in the hearts of the millions of people who have watched you over decades and felt that they were brought a little bit closer to their world.

Thank you, and we look forward to recognizing you in the RECORD of the United States Senate.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I know the Senator from Kentucky and the Senator from Michigan are trying to work through some differences on a potential unanimous consent request, but I have asked them if I might make a few remarks if they are not quite ready yet, and they have graciously allowed me to do so.

What I want to talk about is—it is December 6. It is 19 days until Christmas, and the 117th Congress is quickly coming to a close, but there is a lot of work that needs to be done in the meantime—first, the National Defense Authorization Act, which I hope will be the next order of business.

You know, when people ask me, “What are your priorities when it comes to representing the State of Texas in the U.S. Senate?” I say: Well, it is clear there is one priority, and that is the strength and security and safety of our Nation and our way of life—to preserve and protect the peace and to protect the freedom of all Americans.

The way we do that is through the National Defense Authorization Act. It is, I believe, the most important piece of legislation that we consider each year, among other important pieces of legislation. This is how we support our troops, how we support our military families in an all-volunteer military, how we maintain our military bases, how we modernize our weapons systems and airframes and invest in the next generation of weapons.

I believe what Ronald Reagan said—that we maintain peace through strength—and when we don't make our national defense a priority, when we neglect the most important responsibilities we have here, it sends the wrong message to our adversaries and those who would take advantage of a power vacuum left by an America that refuses to lead.

The National Defense Authorization Act is how we strengthen our relationships with old allies and forge strong partnerships with new ones. For example, as a result of the invasion of

Ukraine by Vladimir Putin, now Finland and Sweden have said they want to become part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which is certainly not what Mr. Putin contemplated when he said he was invading Ukraine because he didn't want a potential NATO member on his border. Well, as a result of his blundering invasion and wrongful invasion of Ukraine, he is now going to have Finland as a NATO partner on his border with some, I believe, roughly, 800 miles of common border.

We know that this is an increasingly challenging global threat landscape, and we have to do everything we can to make sure our troops have the training and the equipment and the resources needed to counter adversaries of today and tomorrow.

Given the state of the world, preserving our military readiness has never been more important. China and Russia have, obviously, grown more aggressive in their efforts to disrupt the global order. North Korea continues to threaten the United States and our allies with its nuclear capabilities. Iran, which is the largest state sponsor of terrorism, continues to threaten democracies in the Middle East, including our ally in Israel, and to threaten not only regional conflict but something worse.

This is a fragile time for global peace and security, and a strong National Defense Authorization Act is the principal way that we supply our military with the resources and certainty needed for our commanders to plan for the future.

But this legislation is about much more than maintaining a strong national defense. It is about empowering and supporting the men and women behind it. America's servicemembers are volunteers, and they have made a commitment not everyone is willing to make in joining the ranks of America's heroes who have defended our country throughout our Nation's history. They make sacrifices each and every day in order to keep our families safe and our Nation at peace, and we owe it to them to give them the support that they need. That includes not only the training, technology, and equipment they need to do their jobs but also the pay and benefits that their families depend on.

In short, a strong National Defense Authorization Act is critical to the success of our servicemembers, their families, American security, and, indeed, world peace. We simply can't neglect this important responsibility or delay it any longer. I think the majority leader, the Senator from New York, has already delayed it to the point that here we are, backed up against Christmas, with no time to spare. Congress needs to pass this annual Defense authorization bill ASAP—as soon as possible. I hear the House is planning to take up the Defense Authorization Act this week, and I hope that the Senate will follow in short order.

For the past 61 years in a row—61 years—Congress has managed to overcome partisan differences and pass this legislation. I hope that will continue this year, but I am becoming more and more concerned given the crunch that we are experiencing here 19 days before Christmas.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, once we pass the Defense authorization bill, which I hope we will do, we have one other big item on the "to do" list, and that is government funding.

You may ask: How in the world did we get here? Ordinarily, in what we sometimes refer to as "regular order" around here, the Appropriations Committee takes up and passes at the committee level 12 appropriations bills. These fund the entire government, from the Defense Department to Transportation, to Foreign Affairs, to—well, everything that the Federal Government does, which is our border security and the like.

What has happened is that that system has broken down and empowered not rank-and-file members of the Appropriations Committee or even rank-and-file Members of the Senate or Congress. What is happening is that this bill is being negotiated, probably on the order of almost \$1.7 trillion, behind closed doors by the leadership, and we will then be presented with a fait accompli. In other words, we will have two choices: to vote up or down on the annual appropriations bill. It is a ridiculous and embarrassing way to do business around here. It is certainly not transparent. It certainly doesn't provide the American people with the information they need in order to decide whether they think we are on the right track or the wrong track.

So here we are, more than 2 months into the fiscal year, and last year's business is still outstanding. Our Democratic colleagues hold the majority in the House and the Senate, as well as the White House. Despite their unilateral authority to set the schedule, they have failed in some of our most basic responsibilities, and that is to advance appropriations bills before the end of the fiscal year.

In September, they punted the funding deadline to December the 16th, which is just 10 days away. And it doesn't sound like much progress has been made. There is no agreement, even on a top-line number, which is the first step for coming up with a funding agreement.

To make matters worse, Democrats are still pushing for dramatic increases in nondefense domestic spending. Typically, these agreements include some sort of parity between defense and nondefense spending, but the spending habits of the last 2 years by the Democratic majority along party lines have been anything but typical.

First of all, our Democratic colleagues stole the taxpayer credit card and went on not one but two spending sprees. The first was called the Amer-

ican Rescue Plan, which included a long list of progressive social policies. That bill cost taxpayers \$1.9 trillion—party-line vote, borrowed money that somebody is going to have to pay off someday.

A few months ago, our colleagues went on a second spending spree with something called the Inflation Reduction Act, which I sometimes called the "Inflation Nonreduction Act" because it won't reduce inflation anytime soon. In fact, it includes nearly half a trillion dollars in new spending.

Anybody who has followed what you do when inflation is raging, as it is now, knows there are usually two components: one is the Federal Reserve that controls monetary policy; in other words, interest rates. They can slow down the economy. They can try to take a shot at inflation by slowing down the economy and raising interest rates, but of course that means the money we have to pay to service the debt that we are incurring here just gets bigger and bigger.

There is a second component, too, when it comes to tackling inflation, and that is the fiscal side, the spending. The reason why we still see inflation at a 40-year high is because our Democratic colleagues, on top of all the spending we had to do on COVID-19 on a bipartisan basis, have engaged in a radical spending spree of roughly \$2½ trillion. That has exacerbated the fire in inflation. Many people who are financially well-off have not experienced much beyond an inconvenience, but to working families who live paycheck to paycheck, the prices they pay not only at the pump but at the grocery store for housing and everything else have gone through the roof. They are the ones hurting as a result of this fiscal irresponsibility.

So after the last 2 years, our Democratic colleagues have spent trillions of dollars on their domestic priorities, and they made no push for parity with defense spending. They didn't couple \$128 billion for K-12 schools with new investments in research and development. They didn't mirror the \$86 billion bailout for labor unions with funding for next-generation aircraft or weapons. They didn't pair the \$80 billion for a supersized IRS with funding to support our troops and their families. They didn't match the \$40 billion for transportation projects with funding for infrastructure updates at our military installations. And they certainly didn't couple the extensive unemployment benefits that they provided with pay raises for servicemembers. So there has been no question of parity between defense and nondefense spending these last 2 years.

They spent trillions of dollars on domestic priorities without even entertaining the idea of more support for our national security. Now they cannot widen that gap any further. We shouldn't stand for it. And we can't shortchange America's military in